

**MINUTES OF THE JULY 16, 2021
CHINCOTEAGUE TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
Council Chambers**

Council Members Present:

J. Arthur Leonard, Mayor
Christopher D. Bott, Vice Mayor
Denise P. Bowden, Councilwoman
William T. McComb, Jr., Councilman
Ellen W. Richardson, Councilwoman
K. Jay Savage, Councilman
Gene W. Taylor, Councilman

Council Members Absent:

None

Staff Present:

Mr. Michael T. Tolbert, Town Manager

1. Call to Order

Mayor Leonard called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

2. Invocation

Councilman Savage offered the invocation.

3. Pledge of Allegiance

Mayor Leonard led in the Pledge of Allegiance.

4. Public Comment

Mayor Leonard opened the floor for Public Comment.

There were none.

5. Agenda Adoption

Vice Mayor Bott asked if they could move item #8 to item #9 and add closed session to discuss Town Manager and Police Chief evaluations.

Vice Mayor Bott motioned, seconded by Councilman McComb to adopt the agenda moving item 8 to item 9 and add closed session to discuss Town Manager and Police Chief evaluations. Unanimously approved.

6. Public Hearing on ARPA Funding

Mayor Leonard read the rules for the public hearing. He opened the public hearing.

- Mr. Scott Chesson, one of the owners of the Best Western, advised he is a 30-year resident of the Island. He stated that he is before Council to share his thoughts about the lethargic actions of the Town of Chincoteague and to address the demonstrated need for a central wastewater treatment plant. He gave the history of the Wastewater Advisory Committee, the responsibilities of the Committee and the many sewage studies throughout the years. He

reviewed information from the Wastewater Management Plan. He advised that the Committee presented the Wastewater Management Plan to Council providing alternative recommendations for wastewater treatment, and it never happened. He advised that the circuit court granted to include Northampton and Accomack Counties into the Hampton Roads Sanitation District which includes Chincoteague Island. He believes a large portion of the “free money” should be earmarked with a relationship with the Hampton Roads Sanitation District. He stated that a new Wastewater Advisory Committee should be established to help the Town move forward with the provision of a safe and affordable central wastewater disposal system for the Town. Many studies have been researched and discussed over and over throughout the years costing the Town a large sum of money. He feels it’s time to get moving again. He thanked Council for their time and urged them to invest this money into the sewage treatment plant before they’re forced to.

- Chamber Executive Director Mrs. Evelyn Shotwell asked Council to consider using some of the ARPA money on a public restroom at the traffic circle on Maddox Boulevard. She reported on the statistics of visitors who asked to use the restroom. She also added that the traffic circle is half-way between the downtown restrooms and the restrooms at the Wildlife Refuge. She stated that with the number of bicyclists and walkers due to the new bike paths this is a necessity. She thanked Council and asked to consider public restrooms at the traffic circle.

- Mrs. Patricia Farley, 3243 Lisa’s Lane, first thanked Town Manager Tolbert for recommending this meeting. She then thanked Councilwoman Bowden and Councilman McComb for urging people to share their ideas. She urged Council to think boldly and into the future when they decide how the money should be spent. She feels the Town should be reimbursed for the shortfalls in revenues, along with the Center, the Island non-profits, and the Fire Company as they all attract visitors and give quality of life to those who live here. She understands that ARPA funds are for infrastructure of broadband, water, and sewage. She feels the broadband is good, the water is safe, but stressed the need for sewage. She stated that the ARPA funds should be used to start this process. She explained her experience with a septic issue. She quoted from the Comprehensive Plan regarding a privately owned wastewater treatment plant. She stated that it’s time to use this money for central sewage. She also urged Council to hire a new Town Planner to look into future planning and development. She stated that the population is growing, and tourist season is longer. This is a sophisticated resort locality with many moving parts. She feels it’s time to hire a Planner to look into the future for what is coming.

- Fire Chief, Mr. Bobby Lappin, with the Chincoteague Volunteer Fire Company advised they are a 501-C3 non-profit organization. He stated that due to the pandemic they have cancelled 2 years of carnival and Pony Swim and have lost approximately \$500,000 in revenue. He advised they have applied for many grants and been denied for many grants. He reported that they were approved for the Office of EMS 80/20 grant to purchase a new ambulance with a final price of \$269,987. However, because of the timing and costs rising, it is now a 64.5%/35.5% grant, leaving the remaining balance of \$95,587. He stated that the Fire Company is asking the Town to pay the \$95,587 through the ARPA funding. He added other expenditures they have incurred this year. They had to purchase 2) Lifepak AEDs at a cost of \$40,000. They purchased 2) new stair chairs which cost \$12,000. Their average spending to restock ambulances is \$21,000.

Fire Chief Lappin then advised of the 2nd item they are requesting. He explained the Fire Company is required to upgrade the self-contained breathing apparatus pack air compressor at a cost of \$250,000. This past year they had to start transitioning their air pack to the high-pressure system to meet the FDA standard with a cost of \$30,000. The current compressor is not able to fill the new air packs because of the low-pressure quality. They requested the funds for a new SCB compressor in the amount of \$53,750. They recently purchased a new set of Hurst edraulic tools at a cost of \$43,000 as the old one has a motor with hoses causing distance from the accident scent to be an issue and it can't be used around water. They spent \$50,000 - \$60,000 last year in vehicle maintenance and he reminded everyone that they moved into the new firehouse 2 years ago and have a mortgage despite the loss of \$500,000. Fire Chief Lappin concluded by asking Council to use the ARPA money for the remaining balance of the ambulance and for the SCB compressor totaling \$149,337.

- Mr. Lance Stitcher, of Seaside Vacations, 4101 Main Street, asked Council to look into the project of wastewater treatment.
- Mr. Rick Watson, Watson Gas, owner of 4089, 4095, and 4102 Main Street, came to Council supporting spending ARPA money on sewage. He explained the hurdles he has faced in renovating his properties in the downtown area. He advised that he heard there is a possibility to purchase the Sunset Bay sewage system. He suggested appropriating some of the funding to purchase it. He stated that the Health Department advised there are 2 kinds of cesspools, ones that fail or ones that are going to fail. He advised he plans to build back his building with the frontage as it currently is. He reported that the old bank building will be open by Christmas. He again asked Council to consider spending the funds on sewage.
- Mr. J. W. Jeffries, 6321 Captain's Lane, Unit 121, stated that he was fortunate to sit in on the interviews of the new part-time EMS staff. He thanked Council for giving the part-time EMS the opportunity to work for the Town. He stated that he has been running the ambulance for 40+ years. He thanked them for thinking of them.

7. Mayor & Council Announcements

Councilman Taylor stated that there is no way to ever repay Fire Chief Lappin and Mr. Jeffries along with the volunteers for all their hours of dedicated service. He thanked them from the bottom of his heart.

Councilman Savage thinks this forum was what they needed. Council needs direction and the community has been very involved in helping them out. He stated that they showed up making recommendations. He appreciated everyone who thought enough of the Town and it's future to come out. He also expressed his appreciation for the Fire Company and all they've done.

Councilman McComb appreciated everyone for coming out. He feels they need to be bold when thinking about the future. He stated that this fund doesn't have to be spent within the year, they have time to make decisions with the biggest impact for everyone.

Vice Mayor Bott thanked everyone for coming out.

Councilwoman Bowden also thanked everyone for coming out. She stated that it seems like a lot of money, but it won't go as far as they would like it to go, and she will treat it like a gift. She appreciated everyone for expressing their thoughts. She advised that she's a member of the CVFC and Mr. Jeffries has been doing this for 40+ years. She always thought she was one of the kids in the Fire Company but she is coming up on 30 years as a volunteer. She stated that when she got into the CVFC, Mr. Jeffries and Mr. Ollie Reed were and still are people you look up to. She also stated that they are good people and she appreciated them and the Chamber. She added that they all make it what it is. She concluded that we all need to work together to make this money do the best they can.

Councilwoman Richardson stated that everything said tonight was all valid. She is glad to see people come out. She thanked everyone. She stated that she has always thought a lot of the Fire Company and appreciates everything they do. She appreciates everyone for what they do, and she thanked them for coming out.

Mayor Leonard stated that this is the 1st step. He advised that with the next step, he will form a committee to talk about what they've discussed this evening. They will report back to Council and Council will have another public meeting. They have time to work on this. He asked everyone to stay tuned and know that Council hears you. He was glad everyone was focused on uses adding that they are limited on what they can do with the money.

8. Closed Meeting in Accordance with §2.2-3711 (A) (1) of the Code of Virginia to discuss employee matters.

Councilman McComb motioned, seconded by Councilwoman Bowden to go into a closed meeting in accordance with §2.2-3711 (A) (1) of the Code of Virginia to discuss employee matters. Unanimously approved.

9. Certification of Closed Meeting in Accordance with §2.2-3712 (D) of the Code of Virginia:

Councilman McComb motioned, seconded by Councilwoman Bowden in accordance with §2.2-372 (D) of the Code of Virginia that the Council certify that to the best of each Council Member's knowledge.

- (1) only public business matters lawfully exempted from opening meeting requirements under this chapter and**
- (2) only such public business matters were identified in the motion by which the closed meeting was convened, were heard, discussed, or considered. Unanimously approved.**

10. Adjourn

Councilman McComb motioned, seconded by Councilwoman Bowden to adjourn. Unanimously approved.

J. Arthur Leonard, Mayor

Michael T. Tolbert, Town Manager